

LUNCH IN THE DEVIL'S KITCHEN ON SADDLE MOUNTAIN

Astoria, Oregon

Sept. 28, 1924

By August Hildebrand, historian of the Angora Club

Going up the short West trail of Saddle Mountain, we passed through the chimney and started to climb the Monkey Trail. Suddenly we turned to the left in a Northerly direction going up at a very steep slant. This was below the top rock, the cliffs of the mountain.

The ground was of loose rock formation, covered with grass, flowers, wild onions and small shrubbery. It was a sort of a mountain meadow, a meadow hanging onto the side of the mountain. It was furrowed with rabbit holes. The tiny animals could be seen running here and there—generally running down grade; it was easier. Two Airdale terrier dogs which had strayed into our party and who seemed to enjoy the outing with us gave chase on several occasions. It was however, a different sport to chase down a steep mountain or to chase on level land. The rabbits were good mountaineers and knew the ground; the dogs were afraid to make large jumps down. One jump, if not taken with caution might land them in the bottom of the lower ravine, a mile or more down. The dogs seemed to know this and the rabbits also and took advantage of the fact by racing down hill and getting away with a saucy flirt of their ears.

Keeping well up under the rock wall and going continually up, we arrived on what seemed to be the most Northerly point. Here were some trees and brush. The sun was in our favor; the weather was clear. Old Sol being in the South while we were traveling to the North of the mountain under the rock wall this gave us continued shade.

This mountain meadow is called the flower garden, as about fifty different varieties of flowers bloom here

during the summer.

From this Northerly point, just below the main pinnacle, we descended slightly and traveled over the ridge leading to the Northeast pinnacle. This is much lower than the very summit of the mountain, and forms the Northeast part of the mountain mass. From here the contour and formation of the whole cluster of peaks may be seen to best advantage. The length of this spur, of this ridge, which terminates abruptly, is about a half a mile. From below it looks as though Saddle Mountain has only three peaks, but from this range many more peaks are observable, this Northeast peak being one which forms the Northerly point of a half or quarter moon shape of the whole mountain, the South peak being the other point. The whole forms the Western part, or about half of an ancient volcano, the Eastern half having no doubt been blown into eternity by an explosion.

Judging by the lines, shape and angles of the mountain, it is estimated that the original height of this volcano, when in action was about 8000 feet.

The ruggedness, the roughness of the whole mountain is best observable from this point. The elevation of this spur is perhaps about 3000 feet. This gives a good observation point. Forest of medium and stunted growth covers this ridge, excepting the very point and North and South slopes, which are covered with grass and the ever present wild onions.

It being September, only a few flowers were to be seen at this time mostly wild asters and golden rod. However, we were rewarded insofar as coloring was concerned by noticing down the steep slopes and gluch-

es, red, brown and golden yellow autumn leaves intermingled with Silver Fir. The latter is in itself a pretty tree of two or three shades. First the dark green, older needles, then the light green needles of this year's growth, then, the tree is tinted over all with a silvery sheen which gives it a dainty and pleasing appearance, and emphasizes its difference from the common fir.

These flaming colors were the only reminder of what is to be expected in a Devil's Kitchen.

The view in the distance was pleasing. To the East we could see the snow capped mountains of Rainier and St. Helens, to the North we discerned the outlines of Coxcomb Hill. Before we went around the North point of the main mountain, we had noticed the breakers on the ocean beach. However, the distant view was only about eighty per cent perfect.

Now we were to descend into the Devil's Kitchen proper, that is, the lowest part of the ancient crater of the volcano. We went down some very steep and almost perpendicular rocky sides of the Northeast Peak. It was with some effort that we managed to get down. Of course, we could have come down with less, but I am afraid it surely would have landed us in Heaven or the Devil's Kitchen before our appointed time had we not used extraordinary care. Care and Caution were our Guides.

We all had prepared for a rough trip. All had ice spikes or hob nails in the soles of their boots. While descending the bare grassy rocky slopes the odor of onions permeated the air. The rough boots loosened ground and squashed the onions and grass under foot. I doubt if it would be advisable to make this journey with smooth soled shoes. I would consider it extremely dangerous.

Arriving in the bottom of the ravine we were pleased to note that instead of finding brimstone and fire we found a pleasing rough, and rocky ravine, overgrown with a forest of stately trees.

It was a sort of an ancient worshipping, forest meeting place, a genuine cool picnic spot that one longs for on a hot summer day. Ice cold water was trickling through the

boulders, etc., etc. The only evidence of the Devil having been in this spot were the Devil's Walking Canes which he perhaps forgot to take along.

Devil's Walking Canes are well known to all western Oregon people as a bushy growth of rather pleasing tropical appearance with large leaves, but with stems overgrown with sharp thorns. These bushes here in the canyon added greatly to the looks of the forest scene.

Exactly at 12:00 o'clock noon fire was started on a rocky damp place so as to avoid danger of fire. Coffee was soon ready and all lunched. Suddenly the tree trunk on which yours truly was standing started to roll down grade. It seemed as if the Devil was responsible; angels would never—no, never—do such an undignified act! But all is well that ends well and at the end of the roll—it was a regular log-rolling contest, the man was on top and the log below. This lucky circumstance was responsible for the fact that no one was hurt.

A pleasant time was passed in this spot. After extinguishing the fire we made ready for the climb from here in about a straight, perpendicular line up the crater wall towards the middle peak. Going steadily upward at a slant we came quickly to another ravine. Here was more water. It was explained by the Chief Guide that these two ravines form the fountain head of Young's River.

Up this ravine steadily, slowly, but surely we moved, the Chief Guide cutting brush so as to make traveling easier for those behind. This he did with the aid of a heavy cheese knife like instrument—a machete, a sugar cane knife. It was very effective and helpful to the rest of the party. All this was over untrodden, unclimbed ground, very steep. In fact, if it was not for the brush and roots which we grabbed and by which we hauled ourselves up hand over hand, I doubt if the ascent from here could have been made. It is much steeper and difficult than the short steep West trail. The ascent gave occasion to remark that it was much easier to descend and slide into a "Devil's Kitchen" than to climb out of it!

While clambering onto a projecting shelf near the top, one of the party, Miss Agnes Carlson slipped and hung onto the rock, lying flat against it, holding onto moss and grass by her fingernails until rescued and pulled up by someone. This was the only really dangerous moment of the whole trip.

We waited on this projecting rock until all had arrived and when Rear Guide Hustwick with Miss Kinney arrived all were pleased. From here we had our first glimpse of the very top, and the cabin on the North or main peak. We waved and shouted and someone waved in return; we could not hear a return sound. Across the abyss in a straight line it must be about three quarters of a mile distant to the North.

From this shelf the Northern main peak looked much more rugged and broken up. The crags to the East of this peak showed up very prominently. A face formed by them was plainly visible and after much guessing we had to pass the honor to likeness to our fellow townsman and fellow Kiwanian, Professor A. C. Strange. The straight forehead, straight nose, straight lips and straight chin were well silhouetted.

While it is supposed that mountains form only likenesses of great National celebrities, here is hoping the Professor, who is well and favorably known in our state, will some day extend his fame further than Oregon.

Several hundred feet more of climbing and crawling brought us to the South trail near the center peak. From here it was easy traveling down in a zig-zag fashion over the long South trail to the base camp at the foot of the mountain. Here we counted numbers, the following answering roll call: E. B. Hauke, Harold Johnson, Frances Wedekin, Vivien Jackson, Mr. Ingraham, Einor Quam, Charlotte Juber, Walter Stokes, La Verne Hilborn, Alfred Johnson, Myrtle Trogen, Mr. Seymour, Miss Larson, Don Koivisto, Axel Ramvick, Agnes Carlson, Paul Hauke, George Carlson, Miss Kinney, George Halgren, Chas. Erickson, Mrs. E. Graulund, Chief Guide John Berry, Rear Guide Chas. Hustwick and the observer August Hildebrand.

We now prepared our second lunch for the day. We had left part of our excess baggage and lunch here under a convenient stump. Walter Stokes had deposited a half loaf of bread with his other supplies. He soon discovered that the inside of the loaf was gone. Several Chipmunks that were playing about and frisking on the tree trunks nearby making faces at him told the story. Walter showed the right spirit. Instead of getting angry he remembered some nursery rhymes he once knew and composed a parody something like this:

Little squirrels up the tree,

Come and see what I can see.

Here this hole into my bread;

You are guilty it is said.

Pray why do this thing in halves

Take it all, you little calves!

With this he placed the remainder on the ground and you should have seen the little rascals. They just knew that Walter was good natured and knew that the bread was placed for them. They ate, filled their pouches, scampered away to place their forage in cold storage, and came for more. Then they sat on their haunches, tail curved up over their backs and extended their forefeet as if to say "Thank you."

I am sure many a Chipmunk home on Saddle Mountain has its bread box filled for the winter. Several snapshots were taken at short range. Western Oregon people know this interesting lively little animal, zebra-like striped into shades of brown. Eastern Oregon Chipmunks are larger, have not that bright coloring and are slower in action.

Arriving at Camp No. 1 of the Eastern Western Logging Company we were made welcome by the crew of the boarding house and were even treated to a large pan of the most delicious doughnuts we ever tasted. We were not hungry as we had just previously eaten lunch at our mountain base camp, but the doughnuts really filled whatever vacant space that remained in our stomachs. The light flaky pastry was made much of.

It was some time before our gasoline Pullman arrived to take us 18 miles to the lower Lewis & Clark railroad station. Here our faithful and dependable Chauffeur Smith was

waiting to take us another eight miles by auto. Exactly at 10:00 o'clock twenty five persons and two dogs had returned safely from a most interesting trip to the Devil's Kitchen of Saddle Mountain—a trip as far as scenery, distance and labor was concerned equalling two ascents to the very top. This was the first organized trip into the Devil's Kitchen and was over the route the Angora Club selected as a trail to be built in the near future.

Since this hike, I have been asked: "Now tell me, really, what is this all about, Mr. Hildebrand? Climbing up that mountain is surely no fun. Sleeping out on the hard cold damp ground in the open is surely no enjoyment!!"

In answer I can only say that some people live only to die. Their consciousness of living is confined within the narrow walls of houses within the confines of cities. He who has for his motto: "The World is Mine" is the only one who really can have conception of the smaller things as well as the greater that make life.

He who can grasp the vastness of nature can appreciate those smaller events that have as a consequence the creation of worlds to come. He who studies nature and natural laws can vision worlds in the making; can experience Life as it is. He will live while others are asleep.

Let me give you an instance which illustrates my point. Years ago when the lumber mill of A. B. Hammond was in operation here in Astoria, I met a common laborer, a lumber worker by the name of Seid Gulam. This man had dark skin and lived among the Hindus that formed part of the labor force of the mill. He did not wear a turban and dressed like any ordinary American working man.

In course of time I became intimately acquainted with him. He told me that he was an Afghanistan man and a Mohammedan. Being somewhat interested in the phases, conceptions, workings and effect of different religions, our conversations often turned on this subject.

In describing different Mohammedan religious festivals, he mentioned a day on which the population of a village or city goes out into the open and releases any animal that is

caged, confined or chained etc. The pious Mohammedan will buy from non-believers, or people of different creeds caged canary birds, parrots, bears, monkeys, etc., they were then released on this festival.

He told me many stories about Mohammedan life—and he conducted himself as a very pious Mohammedan. Of this I may tell you later when occasion demands it. Just now the canary bird story will be sufficient. This narration impressed me very much. I visioned the released bird flying from bush to tree, from hill to mountain. It once beheld the world from its cage but now from mountain tops.

You are that canary, except that you make the limits of your own confinement. The world is yours for the taking.

Many are satisfied to confine themselves to cities, in houses. Many feel at home in jail!!

You will sing "My Country 'Tis of Thee, Sweet Land of Liberty, etc.," without the slightest thought of country, land or liberty. You will sing "I love Thy Rocks and Rills, Thy Woods and Templed Hills"—without ever seeing them. It is for me to point out to you that we have the rocks and rills, the woods and temped hills right in our backyard—and that there is a way to see and appreciate them.

However, there is nothing gained in this world without labor. The labor that you expend in seeing the beauties and mysteries of nature will stimulate and harden you to overcome and solve the difficult phases of life itself. No one ever ascended the pinnacles of success unless he had the stamina necessary to climb a mountain.

Yes, it is easy to slide into the Devil's Kitchen—but it takes some effort to reach that point where Angels are standing with outstretched arms to receive you!!

AUGUST HILDEBRAND,
Historian.